



2020

the wyoming game & fish department

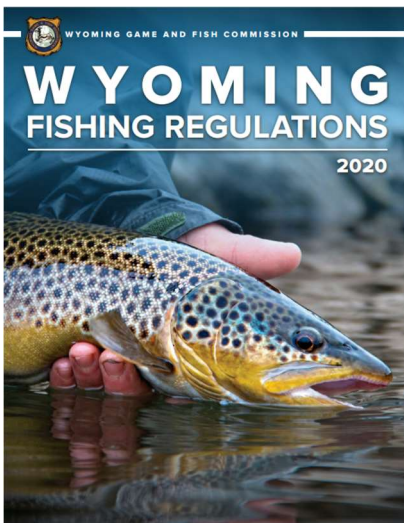
CASPER REGION

angler newsletter

Fishing Regulation Changes

New Brochure for 2020

If you have not picked up a copy of the 2020 fishing regulation brochure, please do so before you get your line wet. You can grab hard copies of the 2020 regulations at wherever you get your licenses or download and save an electronic copy to your phone by going to our website: https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/WYFISHINGREGS_BROCHURE



While no new regulatory changes took effect this year, it is always a good idea to keep a copy of the current regulations for your reference. As a refresher, below is summary of some of the regulatory changes that took effect last year. First, annual fishing licenses are valid for one full year (365 days) from the date of purchase. Second, the upstream boundary of wild-caught baitfish location A is at Glendo Dam. Third, creel limits for trout at several locations on the North Platte River are the statewide river regulation of three trout, only one of which may be above 16-

inches. These locations include the North Platte River between the base of Pathfinder Dam and the vehicle bridge upstream of the Cardwell access, the North Platte River between Alcova and Gray Reef Reservoirs, and all North Platte drainage streams downstream of Bessemer Bend bridge. Lastly, please remember that it is unlawful to have live baitfish in your possession while fishing on waters where they are not permitted.

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New Casper Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist

Welcome John McCoy

In December of 2019, the Casper Region of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department welcomed John McCoy as the new Aquatic Habitat Biologist. In his position, John will work to restore and manage the region's rivers, creeks and riparian areas to provide the greatest benefit to fish, wildlife and people of Wyoming. John fostered a love for hunting and fishing growing up in the hills of southern Ohio. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Idaho in Fisheries and Wildlife Resources. Upon completing his degree, John worked a seasonal position for the Casper Fisheries Management crew where he developed a soft spot for central Wyoming. He worked numerous other seasonal positions for agencies including the USFS, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Nez Perce Tribe. He eventually settled near his hometown managing a satellite office for a Midwest based pond and lake management company. It was there he developed the skills of project planning and implementation, as well as an ability to cultivate relationships with landowners to help them manage their aquatic resources. John is excited to apply those same skills to his new position in the Casper Region.

You can reach John at the Casper Regional Office for any of your aquatic habitat related questions.



Aquatic Invasive Species Program Update

Clean Drain Dry all boats and equipment



The fight against the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Wyoming's waters continued in 2019. Outreach, watercraft inspections, and monitoring remained the focus of the AIS program in the Casper Region. Two permanent Watercraft Inspection Stations were operated at the Torrington Port of Entry and Glendo Reservoir. At other waters (Seminole Reservoir, Pathfinder Reservoir, Alcova Reservoir and Gray Reef access area on the North Platte River), Watercraft Inspection Stations were operated on a rotating basis. The Casper Region AIS crew staffed inspection stations from April 13 until September 21 and conducted 7,108 watercraft inspections. Of those inspected, 141 were high risk inspections and 29 required decontamination. Boats traveling from Lake Powell in Utah and Arizona continue to pose a great risk of transporting Zebra and Quagga Mussels.



Monitoring and early detection of AIS in Wyoming's waters is an important part of the AIS program in the Casper Region. The level of risk and usage determines which waters are monitored. In 2019, Casper Region AIS crew monitored 61 sites on nine waters to detect presence or absence of AIS, as well as to document water quality characteristics. If suspected AIS are found during monitoring, the specimen is shipped to a coordinating laboratory for identification. Once identified, more sampling is done in adjacent areas to formulate a greater understanding of distribution and threat.



While no zebra or quagga mussels were detected in the Casper Region in 2019, there are established populations of other AIS. Curly Pondweed, which was first discovered in the Miracle Mile, continued to expand down-river as far as the north side of Wolf Point in Pathfinder Reservoir. No Curly Pondweed was detected below Pathfinder Dam in 2019. New Zealand Mud Snails were first documented in the North Platte River at three high usage areas: the Cardwell Access area, below Alcova dam, and the Gray Reef Access Area. In 2019, New Zealand Mud Snails were found at a fourth high usage area in the North Platte River, the Miracle Mile above Pathfinder Reservoir. Other AIS to be aware of include Brook Stickleback, an illegally introduced bait-fish; Rusty Crayfish, an invasive invertebrate; and Asian Clams, a non-native clam that is present from Guernsey Reservoir to the Nebraska state line.

The success of the AIS program in the Casper Region hinges on the public's support and adherence to procedures for moving between water bodies. The most likely way for AIS to enter and spread is if they are transported from an infested water by undrained or unclean watercraft or gear, like muddy waders and boots. The way to ensure that you do not unknowingly spread AIS in the Casper Region is to: **CLEAN** all equipment after every use, **DRAIN** any standing water from all water holding compartments, and allow to thoroughly **DRY** before using again. Performing these three simple tasks will help ensure that the wealth of enjoyment we all get from Wyoming's waters will continue to thrive for many generations to come. You can learn more about the Department's AIS program and how you can help protect Wyoming's waters by visiting

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Fishing-and-Boating/Aquatic-Invasive-Species-Prevention> or contacting the Casper Regional



Office.



Regional Fisheries Updates



Seminoe Reservoir

As we all endeavor to practice better social distancing, why not use this opportunity to visit the most remote of the North Platte reservoirs in the Casper Region. Come enjoy the beautiful scenery and excellent fishing at Seminoe Reservoir. Traveling anglers may experience high-quality Rainbow Trout fishing given that the 2019 netting data showed this trout population to have increased since the previous year. In addition to high numbers of one-year-old stocked Rainbow Trout, continued survival of older age-classes of fish should provide anglers with opportunities to catch larger individuals. More specifically, Rainbow Trout sampled during spring netting efforts averaged 16.3 inches and 1.81 pounds, with one rainbow topping out at 20.7 inches and 2.86 pounds. In addition to stocked Rainbows, Seminoe Reservoir also contains plenty of wild Brown Trout that migrate down from the North Platte River. While less abundant, these fish typically outgrow other trout species in Seminoe Reservoir with the largest Brown Trout sampled last spring having measured 24.7 inches and 5.61 pounds!

Since 2014, the overall abundance of the Walleye population in Seminoe Reservoir has remained relatively stable. That being said, the appearance of stability in the overall number of fish does not imply stability in the age or size structure of the population. Fall sampling revealed a Walleye population that, for the second consecutive year, is increasingly comprised of younger fish (under 16.5 inches) and a decreased maximum observed length. In other words, increasing numbers of younger fish are most likely continuing to offset reductions in the number of older and larger fish. Accordingly, Walleye sampled in 2019 averaged 13.1 inches (down from 15.3 inches in 2016) with the largest fish measuring 26.6 inches and 7.26 pounds. It should also be mentioned that there was some evidence of a strong age-one cohort (fish under 11 inches) of Walleye in 2019; though fish this small are not captured very efficiently. However, if this cohort survives as well as those of the previous two years, it is likely that they will make positive contributions to the Walleye population in Seminoe Reservoir.





Pathfinder Reservoir

The state of decline that had been observed in the Walleye population since 2016 appeared to end in 2019, based on the results of fall gillnetting. The overall condition (i.e., plumpness) of Walleye improved in 2019, which was especially apparent in fish under 20 inches. The record breaking growth rates observed in older Walleye (ages four and five) from 2013 to 2014 have slowed substantially. In 2019, the Casper fisheries management crew observed a reduction in the proportion of older Walleye (fish 15 to 20 inches), which is likely the result of angler preference for these fish. In an effort to better understand Walleye ecology in Pathfinder Reservoir, data on Walleye dietary preferences was collected in 2019. Data will continue to be collected throughout the year in 2020.



Overall numbers of Rainbow Trout in Pathfinder Reservoir have remained low in recent years due to poor survival after stocking; however, Wyoming Game and Fish is working hard to bolster the population. Just under 122,000 rainbows were stocked into Pathfinder Reservoir in the fall of 2019. Although trout angling at Pathfinder Reservoir might require some increased patience, we hope anglers are pleased with the size of fish they catch. In 2019, the Rainbow Trout population in Pathfinder Reservoir was comprised of mainly older fish over 18 inches. The rainbows sampled in spring gillnets averaged 18.5 inches and 2.72 pounds. The largest Rainbow Trout sampled measured 21.9 inches and weighed 3.92 pounds. If you find a Brown Trout or Snake River Cutthroat on the end of your line, consider yourself lucky as these fish make up a small percentage of the trout population. During spring gillnetting, browns average 18 inches and

2.13 pounds, and cutthroats averaged 16 inches and 1.79 pounds. The first age-one Kokanee were sampled in spring gillnets and on average measured 12.4 inches and 0.8 pounds. These fish come from an initial stocking of 32,000 fish in Pathfinder Reservoir in 2018. In 2019, just over 104,000 Kokanee were stocked in the reservoir. The 2018 cohort should be available to anglers as age-two fish this coming year.

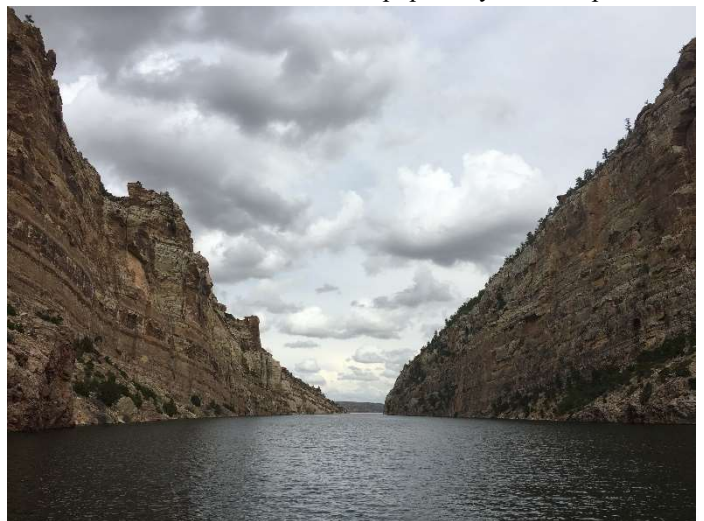




Alcova Reservoir

If you are looking to get out on the lake to fish, but want to keep your commute from Casper short, look no further than Alcova Reservoir. Annual fall sampling in 2019 showed that the number of Walleye in Alcova continued to trend upward. More specifically, Walleye numbers were the highest observed in the past 12 years! Since 2016, excellent survival and recruitment of age-1 Walleye (9.0 – 11.5 inches) and presumably low harvest by anglers have contributed to the positive trend in the Walleye population. Although the number of Walleye remains higher than we would like to see in Alcova Reservoir, the population remains well-balanced in terms of size categories. Anglers that catch Walleye at Alcova will most likely enjoy the quality of their fish as the average has begun to exceed 16 inches and 1.8 pounds and the largest Walleye measured 28.6 inches and 9.72 pounds.

Since 2015, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has annually stocked up to 50,000 Rainbow Trout, 15,000 Snake River Cutthroat Trout, 15,000 Bear River Cutthroat and 15,000 Kokanee in Alcova Reservoir each fall. According to a multi-year evaluation of this stocking program, Rainbow Trout appear to be best at packing on the pounds, while Bear River Cutthroat continue to demonstrate increased survival when compared to other trout. In fact, data from spring netting suggests that the number of Bear River Cutthroat is higher than Rainbow Trout in Alcova despite having been stocked at a lower rate. While they might not grow as quickly as Rainbow Trout, Bear River Cutthroat have finally reached a size that is more desirable to anglers, with the largest sampled fish tipping the scales at 18.6 inches and 2.37 pounds. Fishing for Kokanee salmon in Alcova Reservoir has increased in popularity over the past five years and sampling shows that these fish continue to thrive and grow. Although they can be difficult to catch without dedicated effort and some specialized equipment, namely downriggers and flashers, we have received numerous calls from local anglers that have caught their daily limit of six. In addition to solid numbers of Kokanee in Alcova, the size of this recently planted species is already averaging 17.8 inches and 2.1 pounds, with the largest fish sampled in the fall of 2019 measuring 20.5 inches and 2.74 pounds! Whether you are hoping to catch some fish for the frying pan or hoping for a memorable fishing experience, Alcova Reservoir is a worthwhile destination.





North Platte River – Robertson Road and Big Muddy Reaches

In early-October 2019, the local Fisheries Management crew conducted population estimate sampling on the North Platte from the Robertson Road Bridge through the lower end of Morad Park. At this time, the trout population was measured to be 769 fish per mile with a collective 814 pounds of trout per mile, both of which are below our preferred management objective levels. Rainbow trout comprise over 96% of the overall trout population with brown trout representing roughly 3% of the sampled fish. Rainbow trout in this reach have continued to hold an average length of 14-inches, with multiple



individuals approaching 22-inches long. The number of trout estimated in the Robertson Road reach has not changed much since last sampled in 2017, but the bio-mass (or total pounds of fish) has decreased substantially. This is most likely an indication that the population has replaced some of the older and larger (i.e., heavier) individuals with a similar number of younger and smaller fish. At this time, the cause of the observed multi-year dip in the population abundance is thought to have come from a series of unfortunate circumstances. Being located 42 river miles downstream of Gray Reef Dam, this reach is susceptible to the impact

by high summer temperatures and silt accumulation; causing decreases in trout population productivity and stability compared to upstream reaches. It should be noted that, while the population is currently below our preferred level, trout biomass is still well above the blue-ribbon status of 600 fish per mile. In addition, even one year of high water and good spawning success – similar to the population rise seen in 2013 after Pathfinder spilled - could carry the population back above objective.



The Big Muddy reach of the North Platte, which is located just upstream of the Cole Creek Road Bridge, is the lowest portion of the river for which we routinely monitor trout populations. In mid-October 2019, multi-day sampling events yielded a population estimate of 405 fish per mile and 624 pounds of trout per mile. While the number of trout in this reach is slightly below our management objective of 500 fish per mile, it is noteworthy that population levels seen in 2019 represent a 25% increase in abundance since last sample in 2017. Moreover, the estimated biomass of trout in the Big Muddy Reach is within range of our management object for the first time since 2013.

As is typical of this section of river, over 96% of all sampled fish were rainbow trout, with only a few Brown Trout caught over the three-day event. While there are substantially fewer trout per mile in these lower portions of the river, the average length of Rainbow Trout was 15.7 inches, nearly 2 inches greater than the average at Robertson Road, though the longest individuals observed were still in the vicinity of 22 inches. Interestingly, we also sampled one Kokanee Salmon at Big Muddy, which undoubtedly made its way into the North Platte from Alcova Reservoir. While this species is not likely to establish any kind of permanent presence in their new home, the sporadic arrival of this brightly colored interloper may add some variety and excitement for a few lucky anglers





Glendo Reservoir

Abundance of Walleye at Glendo Reservoir reached a new high in 2019. Good survival and recruitment of younger Walleye in recent years have allowed the Walleye population to rebuild, since the low observed in 2015. Whether or not stocking efforts have contributed to increased Walleye numbers remains to be determined. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocked Walleye fry into Glendo Reservoir in 2016 (approximately 9.4 million) and 2018 (3.9 million). Unusually low numbers of two-year-olds in August gillnets in 2018 provided evidence that the 2016 stocking failed to contribute meaningful gains to the Glendo Walleye population. Because a strong age-1 year class was observed in August gillnets in 2019, the 2018 stocking efforts will be further evaluated in 2020 when stocked Walleye will be fully vulnerable to our sampling gear.

Glendo Reservoir has continued to offer anglers diverse fishing opportunities in addition to great Walleye fishing. Channel Catfish sampled in August gill nets were in excellent condition and averaged 16.5 inches and 1.85 pounds. The largest catfish tipped the scales at 28.8 inches and 9.2 pounds! Annual gillnetting data from Glendo Reservoir provides evidence that certain species of fish, like Yellow Perch and Crappie, likely benefited from low abundances of Walleye in 2015. Under reduced predation pressure, these populations were able to produce strong year classes. In 2019, Yellow Perch averaged 8.2 inches and 0.28 pounds, and the largest Yellow Perch sampled in gillnets measured 11.6 inches and 0.81 pounds. The single year-class of Crappie, which were confirmed to be age four, ranged from 11 inches to 12.3 inches. In 2019, 30,000 White Crappie were stocked into Glendo Reservoir in the hopes that this supplemental stocking will maintain the fishery when the current cohort ages out of the population.



Guernsey Slough

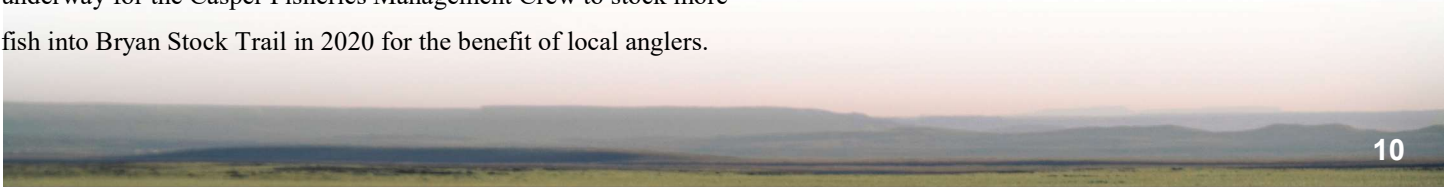


If you are looking for a spot to take the family fishing, consider making a trip to Guernsey Slough. Located on the south side of the town of Guernsey, this community fishery supports a diverse assemblage of warm water species. A variety of gears were used in 2019 to sample the different fish populations, including electrofishing, trap nets, and baited hoop nets. In 2019, Bluegill dominated catches and Largemouth Bass were common. The largest Bluegill sampled measured 7.5 inches and weighed 0.3 pounds; and bass over 10 inches were observed in the slough. Some rare fishes, like Black Crappie, Pumpkinseed, and Green Sunfish were also sampled. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has regularly stocked Channel Catfish in the slough since the late 1980s; however, no catfish were sampled in 2019. The Casper Regional Fisheries Management Crew is interested in learning more about angler use and preferences at Guernsey Slough. In the spring of 2020, we will be installing angler creel survey boxes to gather this information.

If you find yourself fishing Guernsey Slough this year, please fill out an angler survey creel card and deposit it into one of the boxes located at Guernsey Slough. We greatly appreciate your input!

Bryan Stock Trail Pond

Bryan Stock Trail Pond, also known as Lake McKenzie, is a popular urban fishery located immediately north of downtown Casper near the Knife River quarry. Having been stocked with a wide variety of warm and cool-water fish species over the past decade, this small pond offers excellent fishing opportunities to anglers of all ages and skill levels. Maintained by a combination of stocking and natural spawning, anglers can reasonably expect to catch Rainbow and Cutthroat Trout, Grayling, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Black Crappie, Bluegill, and Green Sunfish without draining the gas tank. Lucky for our local anglers, small ponds do not necessarily hold only small fish! Bryan Stock Trail Pond not only yielded the new state record Green Sunfish in 2019, but also contained many large crappie, bass, and catfish. The largest Channel Catfish sampled in 2019 measured over 30 inches in length and quickly maxed out the crew's 20-pound scale! More efforts are already underway for the Casper Fisheries Management Crew to stock more fish into Bryan Stock Trail in 2020 for the benefit of local anglers.



Dome Rock Reservoir

If you have ever driven the Kortess Road from Alcova, WY to the Miracle Mile, then you have driven past Dome Rock Reservoir. This small (9-acre) reservoir has a permanent fishing easement on private land and is located immediately east of the Kortess Road roughly 20.1-miles south of Alcova, WY. In addition to Snake River Cutthroat Trout, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocked 250 Grayling in 2017 in an effort to diversify this cool-water fishery. In 2019, cutthroat averaged 16.9 inches and 1.98 pounds with the largest cutthroat measuring 19.8 inches and 2.58 pounds. Sadly, 2019 gillnetting efforts did not produce any Grayling, despite this species being sampled in 2018. If you decide to fish Dome Rock Reservoir, consider taking some kind of portable watercraft such as a kayak, canoe, or belly-boat to help get past the shoreline vegetation that grows thick during the summer months. Lastly, please remember, the reservoir is managed under a special regulation where you can fish with artificial flies or lures only, all trout less than 20 inches have to be released, and the creel limit is one trout per day or in possession.

Colonel Rogers Pound

If you are looking for a new fishing spot, keep your eyes peeled for updates on Colonel Rogers Pound. Located approximately 0.1 miles SE of Forest Service Road 643 in the Laramie Mountains, Colonel Rogers Pond is a small (1-acre) reservoir located on University of Wyoming land. The reservoir was enrolled in the Walk-In Fishing program for 2019. Colonel Rogers Pond was sampled in July of 2019, and gillnetting efforts produced Brook Trout averaging 10 inches and 0.33 pounds, as well as numerous nongame sucker species. Tiger Trout have been requested to be stocked in 2021 to establish a fishery. If you choose to venture out to Colonel Rogers Pound, you will need a 4WD, high clearance vehicle and hiking boots. It is about a 0.1 mile hike to the pond from the designated parking area.



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